

ABE LINCOLN'S LESSONS IN THEOLOGY



It was Abraham Lincoln who inaugurated our modern national tradition of a November Thanksgiving observance, which has been annually reaffirmed ever since by Presidential Proclamation. In his Thanksgiving Proclamation of 1863, Mr. Lincoln called upon the Nation to engage in “...***humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience...***” This powerful demand for nationwide repentance is highly reminiscent of his earlier proclamation of that same year, calling for a day of “**National prayer and humiliation.**” In that document, he states:

“And, insomuch as we know that, by His divine law, nations like individuals are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war, which now desolates the land, may be but a **punishment, inflicted upon us, for our presumptuous sins**, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole People? We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. **But we have forgotten God.** We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, **too proud to pray to the God that made us!** It behooves us then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to **confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.**”

A. Lincoln

A. Lincoln, 1863

Note: If this was Mr. Lincoln’s message unto his *own* generation, one can scarcely imagine what he would say unto *us*—the “entitlement” generation!

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